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OFFICE OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Washington, D. C.

MEMORANDUM FOR: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR POLICY COORDINATION

SUBJECT: ~~Albanian Operation - Activities of Albanian~~
~~Emigre Groups in Italy~~

1. The following information has reached us through a highly reliable source, from unidentified sub-sources, whose reliability cannot be judged.

2. The two main Albanian emigre groups in Rome have reportedly already decided upon a division of their respective tasks, in the event of an emergency: action in northern Albania will be in the hands of the nationalist bands recruited in the Kossovo by Gani Bey Kryeziu, while the south will be assigned to the Balli Kombetar, whose chiefs are now in Italy. Source points out that this division of labor follows along the lines of an ethnic division of the country as well, since the Ballists are largely Tosks or Himarites (i.e., southern Albanians), while the Bloku Kombetar Independent (BKI) is primarily a party of Ghegs.

3. The Balli Kombetar is said to be busily giving military training to its younger members. At the Grugliasco Camp, in Turin, a Ballist militia is allegedly being formed, while source reports that at Leghorn similar training is being conducted in the strictest secrecy under the auspices of the American Intelligence Service. While awaiting the moment for mass action, source added, agents were also being trained for clandestine individual actions, and a number of saboteurs and intelligence agents now allegedly operating in Albania were originally trained in these centers.

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4. The leaders of the "activist" group of the Balli Kombetar in Italy are said to be Zef Pali, Zef Shestani and Zef Logoreci, all of the Cinecitta Camp. Source reports that Professor Zef Pali, who works for a number of newspapers including Il Giornale della Sera, often goes to the Grugliasco refugee camp where he is allegedly considered a sort of "political commissar". Zef Shestani is a Roman Catholic priest and, together with Franciscan Father Andrea Nargaj, reportedly enjoys the trust of the Vatican. Zef Logoreci is the brother of the BBC's Albanian announcer (the BBC's Albanian language service is reportedly directed by Ihsan Toptani, described by source as "the well-known BIS agent"). Source further reports that Zef Logoreci has recently been called to the United States where, according to his own statements prior to departing from the Cinecitta Camp, he is to give lessons in the Albanian language to young American officers and aviators who are slated to take part in the projected action against Albania.

5. At the same time, the other leading Albanian emigre group, the EKI, has reportedly shown itself anxious to organize an intelligence and sabotage service in the interior of Albania. It has been reported that Father Nargaj (mentioned above), who is Secretary of the Albanian Refugee Committee (operating under the special protection of Monsignor Andrew Landi of the U. S. National Catholic Welfare Conference), has billeted about fifty persons of the Franciscan order, as well as other individuals. According to source, two of the most dangerous of these persons, Kol Bib Mirakaj and Kol Cuni (the latter, source adds, a fanatical Fascist who makes no secret of the fact that he will "start a blood bath" if he ever returns to his homeland), live at the Franciscan Monastery in Frascati, near Rome. Source states that Cuni, originally one of the impoverished inmates of the Cinecitta Camp, suddenly disappeared one day, then reappeared at Frascati a few months later, well-dressed, well-fed, and with plenty of money in his pocket. It was rumored then that he had participated in the training courses at Leghorn mentioned above. Rumors were apparently divided as to whether these courses, for the preparation of agents to be landed in Albania at the appropriate time, were sponsored by the Italian Naval Intelligence or by the corresponding U. S. service. In any event, source stated, a number of young men, distributed in the convents of Rome, Grottaferrata, and elsewhere, are awaiting the zero hour when, collectively or individually, they can carry out the "long-awaited massacre of their own countrymen".

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6. The Albanian emigres in general were reportedly encouraged by the alleged failure of General Hoxha's mission to Moscow, which took place some time in February or March 1949. Despite his two-months' stay in the Soviet capital, he succeeded in obtaining neither a military assistance pact nor any noteworthy economic aid, which led the emigres to believe that the USSR did not intend to commit herself heavily in Albania.

7. Statements made by a certain "Colonel Stevens" have reportedly given rise to much excitement within Albanian emigre circles. Based on these statements, the Albanians in Rome expect important changes in Albania; rumors are being circulated to the effect that Albania will soon become a proving-ground for anti-Soviet activity on the part of the United States; in this manner, it was argued, the United States hoped to use its Albanian policy to test Soviet reactions; as the USSR had not taken any decisive steps with regard to Tito's defection, it was now time for further action. (According to source, one of the most loquacious Albanians to repeat these statements was a certain Ekrem Telhaj, residing at 32 Via Calabria, Rome; a former official and reported collaborator with the Germans, he is now said to be working as a journalist in Cairo and serving as advisor to Prince Omar of the Egyptian royal family.)

8. In connection with these reported pronouncements by Stevens, source added that it had not been possible, so far, to confirm the presence in Rome of Colonel Stevens (an English colonel born in Naples, famous for war-time BBC broadcasts to Italy). The field, on the other hand, believes the person in question may be an Albanian-born naturalized U. S. citizen, Anthony Stevens, employed during the 1920's as a clerk and courier of the U. S. Legation in Tirana, who worked for the OSS during World War II, and is now a minor employee of the U. S. Embassy in Rome. The field states that he has no claim to the title of "Colonel", but adds that it is possible that he serves as a pipe-line to the Embassy for Albanians wishing to immigrate to the United States. According to source, "Colonel Stevens" has been advising such persons to wait awhile, since it will soon be possible for them to return to their own country.

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